

## ***Questions about the EmPOWERing Clean Energy Communities Low-To-Moderate Income Grant Program***

1. *Our organization is applying for a separate grant to perform energy efficiency work, but we're not sure if we'll get it. Will it hurt us to apply to the EmPOWERing Clean Energy Communities Low-to-Moderate Income grant program (EmPOWER) with this program listed on the application?*

No, it will not hurt you – but please make sure the energy measures that will be funded by each grant are very clearly outlined in your grant application. Please keep in mind that the EmPOWER grants will primarily be evaluated based on the annual energy saved, the impact on Maryland's low-to-moderate income residents, and the ability of the project to be completed during the project period.

2. *Could you clarify the requirement of listing on the grant application the geographic area where the work will occur?*

MEA has to report on the specific zip codes where the EmPOWER grant funds are being used. We recognize that you may not know exactly where every individual project will be occurring but we ask that you provide MEA with the most accurate list possible. We recognize that there may need to be some zip codes added or deleted from this list once the actual projects begin to occur.

3. *We're working with a condo association, who does not pay taxes but is not incorporated. If a condo association wants to submit an application, how do they do so?*

Please refer to the updated list of eligible applicants available in the *Grant Overview and Instructions* document at [www.energy.state.md.us/documents/2010LI\\_EmPOWER\\_grant\\_instructions\\_11\\_24\\_09.pdf](http://www.energy.state.md.us/documents/2010LI_EmPOWER_grant_instructions_11_24_09.pdf). This document was updated on November 24, 2009.

4. *The guidelines currently state that the program is open to incorporated nonprofits. Does this mean that nonprofits must have 501(c)(3) status, or are there other kinds of incorporation that are acceptable?*

While MEA is requiring that nonprofit organizations provide proof of incorporation, MEA is not requiring a specific type of incorporation. 501(c)(3) refers to a section of the Internal Revenue Code for tax-exempt status.

5. *What are some examples of projects that were given grant funding during the 2009 grant process?*

The list of projects that were funded in FY 2009 can be found at:

[www.energy.maryland.gov/documents/CommGrantsAppendixDProjectSynopsisFINAL62509.pdf](http://www.energy.maryland.gov/documents/CommGrantsAppendixDProjectSynopsisFINAL62509.pdf).

The low-to-moderate income grants funded in FY 2009 begin on page 5 of this document.

6. *What percent of applicants received funding in 2009?*

Approximately 40% of low-to-moderate grant applicants received funding in fiscal year 2009.

7. *What amount of funding is available this year in comparison to last year?*

The amount of funding available this year for low and moderate income programs is roughly the same as last year. In FY 2009, \$3.5 million in grants were awarded in the low-to-moderate income category. In FY 2010, MEA has approximately \$3.2 million in grant funds available for entities that serve low-to-moderate income Marylanders.

8. *How does the invoicing process work?*

MEA distributes grants through a reimbursement process. Grantees must pay the cost of the measures implemented and then submit an invoice to MEA. MEA will only pay the grantee, not the grantee's vendors. There is no general format for invoices. Each invoice should be accompanied by supporting documentation to support the invoice (for example, receipts and vendor invoices).

Invoicing can be done on a monthly basis or at the completion of the project.

9. *Please explain more about matching.*

There is no matching requirement for this grant. However, any matching that an organization can provide will strengthen the grant application because MEA is trying to maximize the amount of energy saved per grant dollar awarded.

10. *Does the installation of ENERGY STAR appliances count as an approved activity for this grant?*

Eligible activities are listed in the *Grant Overview and Instructions* document posted on the MEA website. ENERGY STAR appliances are considered equipment and therefore could be eligible for this grant.

11. *How long after the grant ends do recipients have to keep reporting energy savings?*

In the final report at the end of the project period, grantees will need to estimate the annual energy savings enabled by the project.

12. *Are the utilities involved in this program?*

No, the utilities are not involved in the EmPOWERing Clean Energy Communities grants. The utilities are running their own energy efficiency programs through EmPOWER Maryland. Information can be found on the individual utility's website.

13. *Can this grant be used for commercial application?*

Commercial applications are eligible as long as the grant applicant can clearly articulate how the energy savings are being passed along to low and moderate income Marylanders. For example, in fiscal year 2009, some low-to-moderate income grants were given to multifamily housing units that serve low-income Marylanders. Some types of multifamily housing units are considered to be commercial buildings.

14. *What is the difference between this program and the EECBG program?*

The Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant (EECBG) program is funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). The EECBG program gives direct grants to the ten largest cities and ten largest counties in the State. MEA is receiving an additional \$9.6 million from this program to award to the remaining 13 counties and 147 municipalities as sub-grants. The sub-grants will enable each local government to perform energy efficiency and/or

renewable energy projects on buildings owned or operated by the municipality. More information on this program can be found at <http://energy.maryland.gov/EECBG.asp>.

The EmPOWERing Clean Energy Communities Low-to-Moderate Income program is funded through the Strategic Energy Investment Fund (SEIF). SEIF is funded by the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI). More information on RGGI and SEIF can be found at <http://www.energy.state.md.us/rggi.asp>.

15. *Can residents be charged for participation?*

Low-income residents cannot be charged in any way for participation in programs funded with this grant. However, programs serving moderate income residents do not have this restriction.

16. *What costs can be included in administrative costs?*

MEA is not placing any limitations at this time on what can and cannot be included as administrative costs. If MEA has concerns with any proposed administrative costs, we will discuss these concerns with the grant recipient prior to the grant agreement being created.

17. *If there are excess funds remaining in a county, can they be redeployed to another county?*

As stated in the *Grant Overview and Instructions*, grant funds may be reallocated by MEA if sufficient qualified grant applications are not received from each county. That being said, MEA intends to encourage every county to fully leverage their allocation of grant funds.

18. *Is the application available on the internet?*

Yes.

19. *Can this grant program be used on rental property, if low income individuals are living there?*

Yes, this grant program can be used to help update rental property as long as the applicant meets all requirements of the grant program. In this situation, renters must receive the energy benefits of the proposed project. An explanation of how the renters will benefit from this project must be included in the grant application.

20. *Can a county government use this grant fund for county buildings?*

This grant program is designed to benefit low-to-moderate income Marylanders. These funds cannot be used to update local government office buildings.

21. *Do we need to list the specific energy measures that we wish to include in our potential project?*

Yes, this information will be required for your energy savings calculations.

22. *Are there any flood plain restrictions?*

To the best of my knowledge, there are no flood plain restrictions related to this project.

23. *Are there any restrictions on what can or can't be funded?*

The list of eligible activities is available on pages 2 and 3 of the *Grant Overview and Instructions*.

24. *Typically savings are done on an annual basis to account for seasonal differences but this project period is less than a year. How do you want us to expect us to calculate our annual savings for the final grant report?*

MEA recognizes that the annual energy savings reported in the final project report will be an estimate. MEA is in the process of procuring an evaluation, measurement, and verification (EM&V) contractor to help us verify the reported energy savings of our projects. Grant recipients may be contacted at a later date to have EM&V services performed on their project.

25. *Can a blower door test be paid for as part of this grant?*

Page 2 of the Grant Overview and Instructions indicates that grant funds can be used for “The costs of implementing projects, including the costs of necessary technical assessments, studies, surveys,...”. A blower door test would be considered a technical assessment.

26. *Would a project focused on improving the energy efficiency of manufactured homes be allowable under this grant program?*

There is no provision precluding manufactured homes from being eligible for this grant program as long as all other grant requirements can be met.

27. *Is it possible to see what the final grant report form looks like?*

The 2009 grant reporting form has been posted to the EmPOWERing Clean Energy Communities website. The 2010 grant reporting form has not yet been created.

28. *Are there any restrictions on the type of contractor that can be used through in this grant program?*

Contractors funded through this grant program should have the necessary qualifications to be able to successfully work on equipment or tasks outlined in the *Eligible Use of Grant Funds* section of the *Grant Instructions and Overview* document.

29. *Can outside contractors be used to perform work under this grant agreement?*

Yes, grant recipients can hire contractors to help them execute their proposed energy efficiency projects, should they be selected to receive a grant.

30. *Can a grant recipient receive a grant in an amount less than originally requested?*

Yes.

31. *Are projects eligible that benefit all Marylanders instead of just benefiting low-to-moderate income Marylanders?*

Grant funds need to go to projects that primarily benefit low-to-moderate income individuals or households.

32. *Can the project be used to fund an HVAC/furnace replacement?*

Yes, as long as the new unit is more energy efficient. Please be sure to include information about the improved energy efficiency in your grant application.

33. *Can these funds be used on a project that is already in progress?*

Yes, but the EmPOWERing Clean Energy Communities grant funds should be used to obtain incremental energy efficiency savings.

34. *Have any allowances been made for state areas with lower salaries?*

For the purposes of this grant application, low and moderate income households are defined as households with total household incomes that are less than 60% and 85%, respectively, of the

median statewide income in Maryland. Household incomes for each Maryland jurisdiction were considered when determining the grant allocation for each county. Additional information on this topic can be found on the Department of Housing and Community Development website at <http://www.mdhousing.org/Website/Documents/IncomeRentLimits2009.pdf>.

35. *Is MEA open to multiple non-profits working together on a grant?*

Collaboration between non-profits is allowed but only one non-profit can be listed as the grant applicant. All other non-profits working on this grant should be listed as project partners. The grant agreement will be made between MEA and the grant applicant organization.

36. *Would an energy efficiency project at a senior center that serves low-to-moderate income individuals qualify for this program?*

Yes, if the senior center can demonstrate in its application that the energy efficiency improvements will benefit the low-to-moderate income Marylanders who use the senior center.

37. *Are there any restrictions to the number of allowable attachments?*

No.